



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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Results of Venison Processing Study Released

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota departments of Health and Agriculture today released the results of a study designed to determine if processing guidance had any impact on the amount of lead found in ground venison. The study found that 5.94 percent of ground venison samples collected from meat processors contained lead fragments.

In August 2008, the North Dakota departments of Health, Agriculture, and Game and Fish developed guidance for hunters and processors regarding the cleaning and dressing of wild game to reduce the chances of lead bullet fragments in the meat. In addition, the Department of Agriculture sent all North Dakota meat processors specific guidance developed for commercial processors.

From November 2008 through February 2009, Department of Agriculture field inspectors collected a total of 404 ground venison samples from 54 meat processing plants across the state. Of the 404 samples, X-rays showed foreign material in 49 samples. Those 49 samples, along with two additional blank samples, were sent to a laboratory in Iowa to be analyzed for the presence of lead.

Of the 51 samples analyzed, 24 showed measurable amounts of lead. In other words, 5.94 percent of the 404 collected samples contained lead fragments.

In March 2008, the recommendation to remove all donated ground venison destined for distribution to food pantries was based on a small but valid investigation that identified lead particles in more than 50 percent of packages. However, those results cannot be directly compared to the current study because of different sampling methods and sampling size of the product collected.

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Because the study shows that the potential for lead fragments in wild game is still there, the North Dakota Department of Health continues to advise that pregnant women and children younger than 6 should not eat any venison harvest with lead bullets. In addition, the department recommends that older children and other adults should take steps to minimize the possibility of exposure to lead and should use their judgment about consuming game that was shot with lead-based ammunition.

A summary of the study is available at www.ndhealth.gov/lead/venison or by calling 701.328.5188. For more information about the study, the media may call Sandi Washek, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.5188 or Dr. Andrea Grondahl, North Dakota Department of Agriculture, at 701.328.4762.

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